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Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

Johnson at Home and Abroad

WITHIN THE past month the President and the country with him have had suddenly and sharply to switch their attention from domestic to foreign affairs. All through January the focus of attention was the Great Society, which the President outlined to Congress and the country in a series of remarkable messages and addresses. Then, and apparently contrary to all expectations, the situation inside of South Viet-Nam took a dramatic turn for the worse, a victory of the Viet Cong seemed probable, and to this the Administration responded by becoming an active belligerent. Since then, interest in the Great Society has, of course, been in eclipse.

Even if, as I still hope and believe, the fires of war in Asia are damped down and brought under control, the experience of the turn between January and February is a sign of things to come. The Johnson Administration is almost certain to find that again and again the unfinished business of reform and development at home is interfered with and interrupted by the unfinished business abroad. Thus, there is as yet no prospect of a peace in Asia, and unless and until the world is in sight of a peace in Asia, this country will be confronted by a series of crit-



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ical choices. That will not be all. There are on the horizon the clouds of a gathering international financial storm which could put in jeopardy the high prosperity which is the foundation of the President's political strength.

THE CRUX of the situation, I venture to think, is the conflict between the unfinished business of making our democracy work well at home and the unfinished business of adjusting our foreign commitments.

Our unfinished domestic business consists of the problems which have accumulated during this half-century of wars. Never for more than brief periods during this time have the American people been free to fix their minds on their own problems. They have had to fight wars and prepare for wars. As a result, they have not had the time, the energy, or the money to educate their children adequately, to modernize their cities, to conserve their natural resources. The consequences of all this neglect are the violence and the bitterness, the squalor and the crime, which trouble our domestic peace.

The election of Mr. Johnson and the President's January program for the Great Society were a natural and necessary response to the needs of our people—our people who, though they had grown rich in this half-century, had not been allowed to concentrate their attention and their energies on their own affairs. Lyndon Johnson's mandate was

to take advantage of the international pause which followed the second Cuban crisis and the Test Ban Treaty.

BUT THE experience of February is a warning that we may not be allowed to take care of our own domestic business unless and until we deal with our unfinished foreign business.

The chief unfinished foreign business is the failure to reach a settlement of the World Wars. Thus, Europe is divided, Germany is divided, Berlin is divided, and while there are very promising indications that these divisions will be closed gradually in the course of a generation, there is as yet no certainty of it. The disorder in Asia is even worse, and as things have developed — without our planning it or wanting it to be that way—we have become involved in Eastern Asia far beyond the limits that responsible Americans have ever thought natural or necessary or proper.

THE JOHNSON Administration will not be allowed to devote itself to the Great Society here at home unless it develops a foreign policy which faces lucidly and deals constructively with the pressing problem of the overextended commitments of the United States. To develop such a policy will require as high a degree of intellectual and moral courage at home as the physical courage we expect of the soldiers who risk everything abroad.

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